

Strange and Wonderful

American Folk Art
from the Volkersz Collection



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Cover Image: Juanita Rogers, *Standing Creature*, c. 1980, unfired clay, hair, grasses, 10 ¼ x 6 ¾ x 5, photograph by Tom Ferris

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Introduction

by Willem Volkersz

In 1962, when I returned to Seattle after three years in Europe, I resumed my studies at the University of Washington. Although I had started as an English major four years earlier, this time I decided to take seriously my longtime interest in art and design. During my high school years, I had worked for one of the leading interior design firms in Seattle and got to meet architects, designers and craftsman. Several contemporary artists who worked at the business became my mentors. So it seemed that architecture or interior design might be a good career choice.

One day at the School of Art, an instructor took our class to a lecture room and there, in the darkness, showed us slides of the magical *Watts Towers*, a group of tall structures built largely from found materials by an Italian immigrant in the middle of urban Los Angeles. Having grown up in Holland, I had never seen anything like this and decided to drive to California to see the towers in person.

In the middle of this Los Angeles neighborhood of modest homes, the towers were hard to miss. Simon Rodia had built these structures next to his house on a long, triangular lot next to a railroad track and surrounded them with an undulating concrete wall decorated with glass shards and pieces of broken ceramics. Although the builder was nowhere to be seen, I took many photographs and came away intrigued by this man's extraordinary vision. And so began a lifelong interest in art made by men and women who, although untrained as artists, have a powerful need to express themselves—and often do so in unconventional ways.

Unburdened by the history of art and with limited resources, these folk artists (also known as naives, visionaries and self-taught artists and, when operating on the economic and social fringes of society, a *outsider* artists) draw heavily on their personal experiences and skills and develop their own—often very unusual—formats. Because of their lack of traditional artmaking skills and the eccentric forms their work takes, they are often not taken seriously and (especially when the work takes on the scale of the *Watts Towers*) even vilified by neighbors and pursued by code enforcers.

An example of an artist who was at odds with his community was Jesse Howard. When I began teaching at

the Kansas City Art Institute in 1968, I heard about an eccentric sign painter in Fulton, Missouri. When I first visited him, the artist was in his 80s and still working vigorously on neatly lettered signs of all sizes. Outspoken about crooked politicians and injustices he felt were dealt him and others, the signs lashed out against anyone deserving exposure (even ridicule) and often employed biblical quotations in support of his judgments and dire predictions for mankind. While graphically powerful, it is not surprising that his family and neighbors did not understand the artist's "signs and wonders" nor the interest taken in his work by visitors. I visited Jesse many times (sometimes with my students) and we became friends. I fondly remember driving him to Kansas City for his solo exhibition at the Kansas City Art Institute and still feel his hand in mine when I last visited him, just before his death at the age of 98.

I have always been a collector. As a boy, I pasted cigar bands in composition books and collected coins given to me by foreign visitors to our home in Amsterdam, the Netherlands (my family emigrated to Seattle in the early 1950s). As an adult, my interest in collecting turned to art. By coincidence, my serious interest in collecting folk art began at a time when the United States celebrated its bicentennial in 1976; as part of these events, a number of states decided to organize exhibitions centered on folk art. It was often such exhibitions that guided our search.

One of these surveys was called *Missing Pieces—Georgia Folk Art 1776-1976*. I sent for the catalog and found that the exhibition contained not only traditional objects (such as quilts, baskets and woodcarvings) but also the work by seemingly eccentric artists who, while not fitting the folklorists' traditional definition of "folk art," commended themselves through their powerful images and strong messages. I took a sabbatical from teaching and, with my wife and son (who was then 7 months old) drove to Georgia to meet some of these artists.

One of our first encounters was with Howard Finster, a preacher who had decided some years earlier to build a sculpture park called *Paradise Garden* in a small town in northwest Georgia. Everything he created there contained Bible quotations combined with personal recollections. When we met him, he had just begun a series of paintings; a sign explained that "One day I dipped my finger in

white paint and there appeared a human face at the end of my finger. A feeling came into me that I should paint sacred art pictures. I am now trying.” From the paintings nailed to the front of his bicycle and TV repair shop, we selected one for purchase (*What Is the Soul of Man*, now in the collection of the High Museum in Atlanta). This work began my fascination with works that combined text with images; in the hands of artists whose experience with the written language may be limited, words and individual letters take unusual twists and turns that make them as powerful as the images they share.

In 1982, I was invited to speak at an exhibition organized by the University of Missouri (*Missouri Folk—Their Creative Images*). One of the artists included was Robert E. Smith; upon hearing that I was going to speak at the opening reception, Robert packed up one of his paintings and sent it to me in the hopes that I would buy it. I not only sent him a check but also purchased most of the paintings he had in the exhibition and became a lifelong supporter and collector of his work. Robert is an interesting example of one type of artist that is often included in the folk art genre: someone who is singularly gifted but who suffers from emotional or developmental problems. Their view of the world and their unique visions allow us glimpses into worlds that would otherwise be unknown to us.

While Smith’s work is narrative in nature, the creative output by Mark Negus is more mysterious. Mark found me when he was still a young man through an article on our collection in *The Kansas City Star*. For over thirty years, I have been the lucky recipient of Mark’s correspondence; he is a consummate wordsmith and fills his letters with arcane language and commentary on his life as an artist, gardener and Victorian literature buff. Drawings, small paintings and carvings often accompany his missives. The topics of his work are often obtuse and may be inspired by dreams, memories, 19th century poets, or occasional travels in his native Midwest or trips abroad with his family. I find his work intensely personal and evocative and I relish my friendship with the artist.

Alva Gene Dexhimer was introduced to me by my friend David Dunlap, who had found a yard full of painted sculptural objects (all priced to sell) while traveling a country road on his way to the Ozarks region in Missouri.

After he fell off a tractor as a child, Dexhimer developed learning disabilities but showed a profound ability to draw and paint, with an almost photographic memory for visual imagery. He eventually dropped out of school and lived with his brother in a trailer; while brother Abe worked in a shoe factory, Alva drew on whatever materials he could lay his hands on—especially leather scraps and other discards from the shoe factory and pieces of cardboard which he shaped carefully with rounded corners. On these he painted iconic portraits of his favorite country singers, comic book heroes and faces of real estate salesmen copied from newspapers; scraps of wood were transformed into cowboys and crosses.

Ultimately, what draws me to the work of folk artists is the direct, honest and original expression of memories, ideas, feelings and convictions with an often startling use of materials. For years, my wife and I have driven the back roads of the Midwest and South in search of artists. In the early days, we relied on a small network of academics, artists and museum personnel who shared information, knowing that the work of these “naives and visionaries” was unique and that it should be documented, collected and celebrated. We thoroughly enjoyed our journey (literally and figuratively) and enjoy the opportunity to share the collection with a wider audience.

I want to thank Sam Gappmayer, CEO and President of the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center for initiating the idea for this exhibition and accompanying catalog. I am indebted to Tom Patterson, one of the foremost chroniclers of this genre, for his thoughtful essay on our collection, his knowledge and perspective on contemporary American folk art, and his thorough research—all of which lead to a very readable essay. And I much appreciate the Missoula Art Museum’s record of exhibiting these “strange and wonderful” artists and Steve Glueckert’s provocative questions that led me to retrace the steps we took and remember the roads we traveled in our search. While this work may surprise and startle some viewers, it is my hope that the exhibition will also delight with its humor, underlying humanity and the unique ways the artists have found to express themselves.

Notes on the Collection

by Stephen Glueckert

Willem and Diane Volkersz are artists and collectors. The collection was developed in tandem by the couple and is truly a collaborative, life-long endeavor by both. As described in the following interview, the two worked as a team in acquiring, developing, researching and preserving the collection. This traveling exhibition represents a fraction of the hundreds of objects in their collection.

“Folk” is defined in the Webster’s dictionary as meaning “common people, group of related people, people in general, implying a primitive state or condition.” Thus I like to think of folk art as “art of the common people.” The topic “folk art” encompasses a broad range of intellectual territory, artisans and works. The British scholar Roger Cardinal coined the term “outsider” in his book Outsider Art in 1972 and the term came to refer to artists working outside of avenues of popular and commercial support. During the 1980s and 1990s there was a proliferation of art terminology and consequently a bit of confusion related to “folk art”. Older terms like Art Brut and Primitivism were joined by labels Naïve Art, Outsider Art, Self Taught, Visionary Art and Prison Art

and, most recently, Fauve Folk. As a simple consideration, when looking at terminology in a more universal way, the term *folk art* serves to encompass and overlap many of these groups. For the purposes of this exhibition and article I will use the term “folk art” as a broad and inclusive genre.

There are aspects of the Volkersz Collection that have contributed to making it unique and a collection that is an artwork in itself. Collections of all kinds of objects have been assembled by people from all walks of life but I would assert that this collection is different. There are three underlying (yet overlapping) factors the couple has used in their decision-making process. First, the work was assembled by individuals who are both studio artists, each with an appreciation of creative innocence. Secondly, the collection was developed through the eyes of a couple who are extremely well-travelled, with a wealth of life experiences. Finally, the collection was built by disciplined and giving educators with a special sensitivity to these oft ignored artists. (fig. 1) It is with this background that I formulated the following six questions for Willem to discuss.



Fig 1. Selections from the collection on display in Volkersz’ studio, photo by Willem Volkersz

Stephen Glueckert: As your collection has evolved, so has your life. Can you describe the involvement and attitudes of Diane and your son to the evolution of the collection?

Willem Volkersz: When Diane and I met in art school in Seattle in 1964, I had only just developed an interest in folk art environments. Shortly after we were married we moved east for my first teaching job at Ohio State University. On weekends, we would often drive to Antioch College in Yellow Springs, where a friend was teaching. On the way, we'd come through the town of London, Ohio where we explored antique stores. In one, we found a trunk full of quilt tops, an art form I was unfamiliar with. (fig. 2) Diane and I were both taken by the stunning visual impact these quilts had and purchased quite a few over the period of a year. This became Diane's contribution to our emerging interest in folk art. After we moved to Kansas City, I became aware of numerous environments in Kansas and Missouri and we began to make trips to document these sites and meet artists. In 1977, I took a sabbatical and packed up the family (which now included Jason, born in 1976) and took an extensive camping trip into the "Deep South" during which we met artists such as Howard Finster, Eddie Martin (aka St. EOM), Lonnie Holley and Columbus McGriff. Although we had little cash, we purchased a few items—mostly on installment payments. It was this particular trip that made the search for folk art and artists a family affair.

While I am the more compulsive collector, Diane has always loved the research we do in an attempt to get information on so-called "anonymous" artists; she enjoys this, is really good at it and has made a very important contribution to this aspect of our collecting activity. Some years ago, we spent three days in a library in Kansas searching microfilm to locate an article that had been published on Arthur Frenchy, an African American artist in our collection. (fig. 3) Our search also led us to the courthouse in Lincoln, Nebraska and the artist's hometown of Falls City, Nebraska. Both Diane and I have enjoyed putting together a narrative about Arthur Frenchy's life.

SG: All artists seem to be avid collectors. And some of the most significant collections of folk art have been amassed by practicing artists. How has this collecting affected your family?

WV: In 1968, Gregg Blasdel published an article in *Art in America* on unique environments built by "grass-roots" artists. The article included Jesse Howard in Missouri and Samuel P. Dinsmoor in Kansas (two artists with whom I was already familiar) but also some that were new to me, like Herman Rusch and Fred Smith in Wisconsin, both of whom we visited a few years later. Since the environments were generally great for photo documentation but not for collecting, I began to search for artists who had

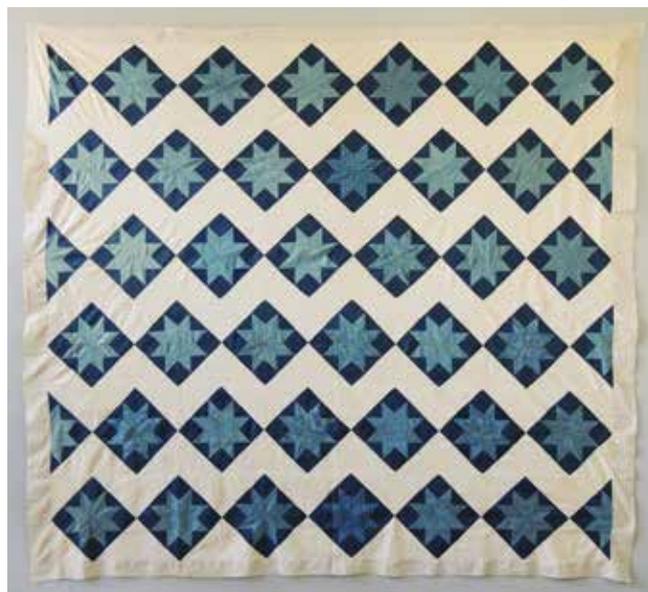


Fig. 2. Star quilt top collected in Ohio, late 19th century, appliquéd cotton, 83 " x 92", photo by Willem Volkersz



Fig. 3. Arthur Frenchy, 1964, photographer unknown



Fig. 4. Diane Volkersz with son Jason inspecting the facade of Howard Finster's Paradise Garden, photo by Willem Volkersz



Fig 5. Howard Finster's Paradise Garden, 1977, photo by Willem Volkersz

objects for sale. Becoming increasingly interested in this phenomenon during the 1970s, I began contacting artists and curators before traveling to a specific part of the country and discovered that there was a small band of creative people who were interested in these artists. In addition to Gregg Blasdel, this early group of aficionados included Michael Hall, who amassed an amazing collection while teaching in Kentucky; Bill Dunlap, who was on the faculty of Appalachian State University and gave us some great tips in and around Boone, North Carolina; Patti Carr Black at the State Historical Museum in Jackson, Mississippi; the artist Andy Nasisse in Athens, Georgia; artist and dealer Anton Haardt in Montgomery, Alabama; and the dealer/collector Larry Hackley in Kentucky. These people provided us with leads (and often personally introduced us) to wonderful artists.

SG: Much of the collection was amassed in "tornado alley," the Midwest. Having to move your collection to Montana, has there been a disconnect, or do you feel there are regional characteristics to the Midwest work in the collection, or that "folk" transcends region?

WV: Since we lived in Kansas City for 18 years, we did much of our collecting in the nearby South. (fig. 4) Because of the climate, it was easier to find artists, who often put work on permanent display in their yards or who could be found whittling on their front porch. I also learned that many African American artists had come from families who were brought to the South as slaves from areas of West Africa that did not have a written language but expressed ideas and tribal history through visual depictions (often on cloth). These families came from African tribes that also had a strong sculptural tradition, so it was not surprising to find an abundance of three-dimensional and environmental work in the South. As I interviewed these artists, I became aware of the strong oral, storytelling traditions which often led them to create narrative work. Some of these qualities are unique to Southern folk art; in some cases, I originally thought some work I encountered was highly eccentric and unique, only to learn that it was based on cultural traditions, often African in origin, unfamiliar to me. And, to my surprise, some of these traditions found their way into the general culture and the art of individuals from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, such as the frequent use of shards and other broken items in Howard Finster's *Paradise Garden* environment. (fig. 5)

When we moved to Montana in 1986 we were not only physically further away from the areas where we had been collecting but also much of my time and energy was taken up by running the School of Art at Montana State University as well as by teaching, my own studio work, travel and research. This also became a time when we were asked to loan our collection to museums and

I became more active as a curator and writer. While we have documented some environments and have collected some work in this area (i.e. the Pacific Northwest and Rocky Mountain West states), the last 20 years have been more involved in reflection on our years of travel and collecting. But I have found some great pieces in antique stores in Montana, like Ernie Puro's carvings and Andrew Johnson's paintings (both Montana artists). (fig. 6)

SG: You have an active and vital studio practice which is quite different from the work you collect. How has the collection influenced your own studio practice?

WV: Howard Finster once told me that he could use anything I gave him in his *Paradise Garden* sculpture garden. Seeing the use of found and recycled objects by folk artists and the serendipitous application that gave old objects new meaning, was an epiphany for me. While I had already started to use some found objects in my graduate thesis, I had been trained to use more traditional painting materials. I learned that I could use *anything*, from objects I collected to those that I made, in my work. The lessons I learned from these folk art masters was tremendously liberating. This was, in part, the impetus for my mixed media sculpture, in which I combine painted surfaces with neon, found objects, and handcrafted furniture. (fig. 7) And because much of the folk art I was attracted to was highly personal as well as narrative, I made a major change in the direction of my work from using modernist concepts to a body of work that was narrative and often autobiographical in nature.

SG: Can you talk a little bit for your own passion for sharing this work and offering it to regional museums as an outreach and educational resource?

WV: As a teacher, I have always wanted to open new doors for my students. At the Kansas City Art Institute, I taught a course titled *Naives and Visionaries* for the college's liberal arts program and also taught a 5-week studio workshop on the topic, taking a group of students on the road to see environments and meet artists. (fig. 8) I also wrote a chapter, *Word and Image in American Folk Art*, for a book published by the University of Kansas. Then museums began to ask if they could borrow work from the collection. I guess I have a believer's zeal for spreading the word about this phenomenon, which the public often only recognizes after it has been pointed out to them. I also find that some art students share the same kind of raw artmaking ability with folk artists; students are sometimes less interested in the traditional skills inherent in "copying nature" and often their mature work, like the artist Nick Cave who was a student in my foundation class, reflects an ability to create their own unique format (in Cave's case, a combination of African dance and costume traditions, performance, and the use of found objects).



Fig. 6. Andrew Johnson, *Tornado*, c. 1930, oil paint on board, 26 x 22, photo by Willem Volkersz



Fig. 7. Willem Volkersz, *Selfportrait (Baggage)*, 1991-2005, neon, wood, paint, postcards, 96x144x15, photo by Tom Ferris



Fig. 8. Jesse Howard with student Janet Pihlblad, April 1978, photo by Willem Volkersz

Seeing our collection in a museum setting is always wonderful (and revealing: curators often see relationships between images and objects that I was unaware of, so it makes us see the work in a new light).

SG: There are many significant collections of American Folk Art which have found homes at museums. At this time, do you have a plan for a permanent home for the collection?

WV: A few years ago, Diane and I met with a friend who was then a curator at the American Folk Art Museum in New York City to begin exploring ways in which we might find a home not only for the collection but also for our folk art library, research materials, correspondence, audio-taped interviews, and thousands of slides. We are currently researching institutions that might be interested in various aspects of our collection. For example, there is one organizations that focuses primarily on environments, and they might be interested in our slide documentation. I think this is a good time for us to get serious about identifying the appropriate institutions and begin to donate or make promised gifts. There are now a number of museums collecting folk art and we plan to contact them to gauge their interest in the collection.

Conclusion

It is important to note that there are many significant collections of self-taught and folk art that have found a home in America's collecting institutions, including the Anthony Petullo Collection donated to the Milwaukee Art Museum and the T. Marshall Hahn Collection which went to the High Museum in Atlanta. This exhibition testifies that the Volkersz Collection is one of the most significant Self Taught/Folk Art collections in the country and certainly in the region.

The exhibition *Strange and Wonderful: American Folk Art from the Volkersz Collection* was curated by Sam Gappmayer of the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center and Stephen Glueckert of the Missoula Art Museum in consultation with Willem Volkersz. Over the years, both Sam Gappmayer and the Missoula Art Museum have worked with Volkersz in sharing this important collection. The MAM has shown parts of the Volkersz Collection including *Robert E. Smith - Story Painter (1990)*, *The Radiant Object (1994)* and most recently *Alva Gene Dexhimer - Missouri Maverick (2012)*.

I would like to thank Sam Gappmayer of the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center who reached out in a spirit of collaboration to celebrate this important treasure. Everybody has the experience of walking on the beach and collecting stones. But for Willem and Diane Volkersz those stones are the innocent and direct expressions of folk and self-taught artists. Finally I would like to thank Willem and Diane Volkersz for their willingness to share this important collection.

Stephen Glueckert was born in Missoula, Montana and received a BFA from the University of Idaho and an M.Ed in Art Education from Western Washington University. He has taught throughout the Northwest, the University of Papua New Guinea, and The University of Montana. He has been a recipient of a Montana Individual Artist's Fellowship. In addition to being a practicing studio artist, he has written extensively about contemporary artists of Montana. He has been Curator at the Missoula Art Museum since 1992.

An Eye for the Extraordinary

**Reflections on a Classic Collection of
Contemporary American Folk Art**

by Tom Patterson



Fig. 1. Simon Rodia, *Watts Towers*, 1964, photo by Willem Volkersz

After I began researching and writing about contemporary folk art in the early 1980s, it didn't take long for me to cross paths with Willem Volkersz, even though we lived 800 miles from each other. An academically trained artist and art educator, Willem was a little more than ten years older and equally far ahead of me in his experience with American folk art. He had been seeking out folk artists since the late 1960s and documenting their work, which he and his wife Diane had also begun collecting. By 1980 Willem had emerged as a prominent figure in what was then a small, informal national network of folk-art enthusiasts.

Like me, Willem had been drawn into these endeavors through an interest in folk-art environments. While the first such sites I visited were in the American South, my native region, Willem's initiation started on the West Coast, with the *Watts Towers* in Los Angeles. (fig. 1) Italian immigrant Sabato Rodia spent three decades building this visually stunning group of 17 mosaic-encrusted, scrap-metal spires and related structures on a triangular lot in the city's Watts district. He left Watts in 1955, ten years before Willem first visited the site, now internationally recognized as a masterwork of vernacular architecture.¹

Preparing Willem for his introduction to the *Towers* was the enthusiasm he had earlier developed for neon signs and other visually arresting examples of outdoor advertising. He had never seen such spectacles in the Netherlands, where he spent his childhood. His experience in that small, tightly regulated country gave him a special appreciation for the exuberant creative expressions with which some Americans freely customized their residences and businesses. Places that had been visually enlivened by their owners in unusual ways caught his attention wherever he encountered them, and he started photographing them as a teenager. Existing for its own sake, with no commercial purpose, Rodia's astonishing visionary creation far surpassed all the other roadside attractions Willem had come across.

A few years after his revelatory visit to Watts, Willem moved with Diane to Kansas City, Missouri, where he began teaching at the Kansas City Art Institute. Hearing from colleagues there about Jesse Howard's sprawling environment known as "Sorehead Hill," he made the 150-mile trip to Fulton, Missouri, for his first look at the place. (fig. 2) He found it densely planted with stakes and poles bearing handmade signs promoting Howard's religious convictions and personal philosophy or railing against corrupt politicians, social injustices and mean-

1. Information on Willem Volkersz's career and collecting activities is drawn from the author's phone conversations and e-mail exchanges with Willem during the first four months of 2013, as well as Willem's previous writings on folk art, published and unpublished.

spirited neighbors. Then in his eighties, Howard still lived on his property, which he had spent 25 years posting with his neatly printed rants and embellishing with other handmade constructions. Willem formed a friendship with him over the course of many visits and extensively photographed the site.

It wasn't until after Howard's death in 1983 that Willem and Diane acquired a number of his signs and personal papers. The examples in *Strange and Wonderful* are fairly typical, especially *Dear Mr. President Nixon* and *Head Hunters*, with their carefully rendered lettering and tight spacing. Howard was clearly possessed of an overwhelming need to express himself and a determination to persevere in the endeavor, despite the hostile reactions his work sometimes generated.

Also broadening the Volkerczes' folk-art horizons in the Midwest was the Kansas Grassroots Art Association, a group of academically trained artists interested in folk-art sites.² The organization introduced them to other environments created by self-taught artists in the region,

and to an emerging national network of people interested in such things—mostly other trained artists, some sidelining as curators or part-time art dealers. Among them was Gregg Blasdel, whose prescient article about folk-art environments in a 1968 issue of *Art in America* caught Willem's attention.³ And in 1974 Willem saw these sites celebrated in the landmark exhibition *Naives and Visionaries*, at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis.⁴ All of these developments occurred in the 1960s and '70s, a cultural era when creative autonomy, raw expression and authenticity were increasingly valued.

American folk art was given a patriotic spin in several exhibitions commemorating the U.S. Bicentennial Year, including *Missing Pieces: Georgia Folk Art 1776-1976*, a historical survey sponsored by the Georgia Council for the Arts and Humanities. Although they weren't able to see the show, Willem and Diane were impressed with its illustrated catalog, which alerted them to several living folk artists new to them at the time.⁵ The publication also inspired their initial foray into collecting contemporary folk art.

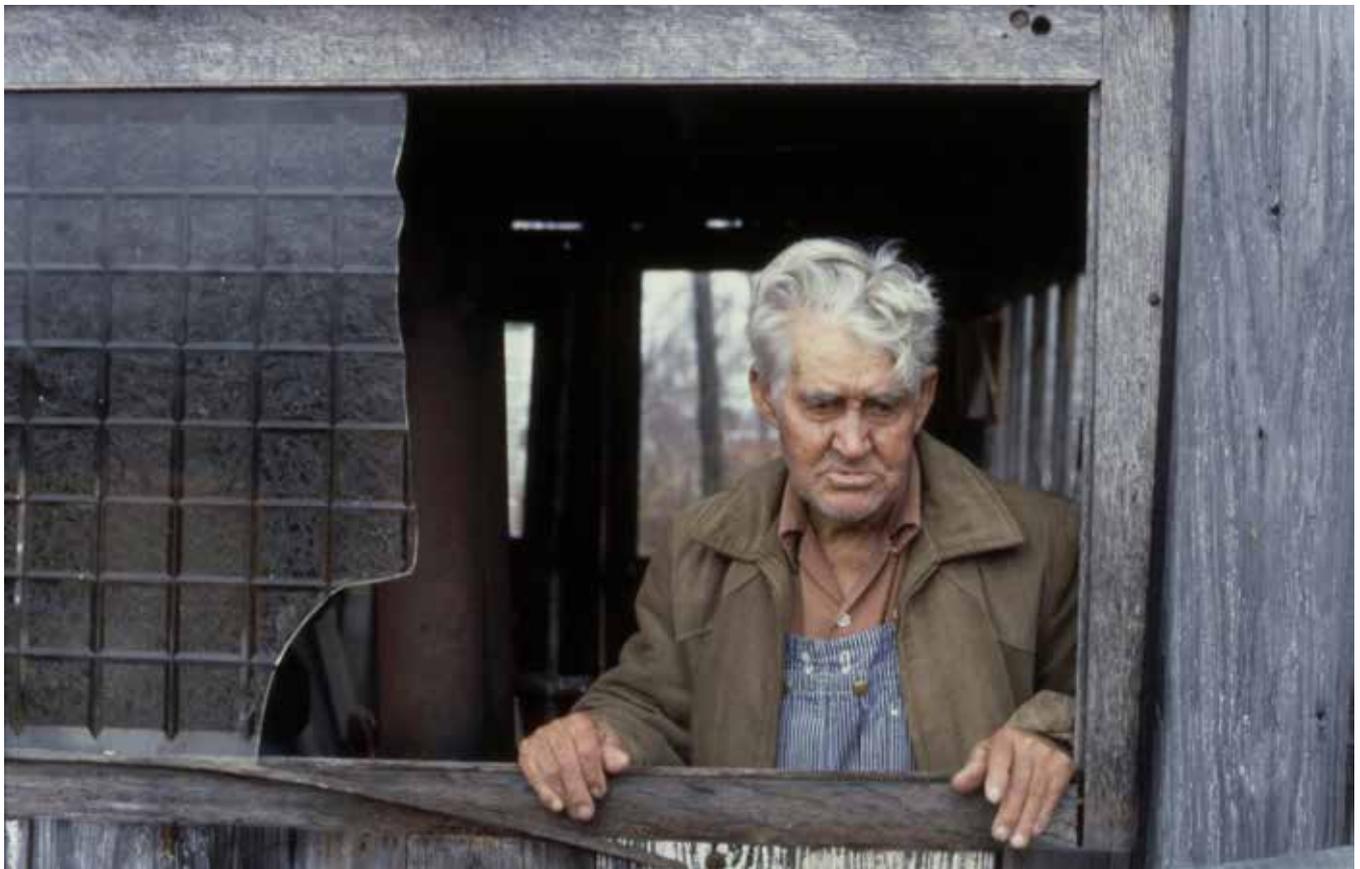


Fig. 2. Jesse Howard at Sorehead Hill, Fulton Missouri, 1982, photo by Willem Volkercz

2. The Kansas Grassroots Art Association was organized in the 1960s to document, preserve and promote appreciation of "grassroots art sites" in Kansas and other midwestern states. For more information, see the association's website, grassrootsart.net.
3. Gregg Blasdel, "The Grass Roots Artist," *Art in America* #56, Sept.-Oct. 1968.
4. See *Naives and Visionaries* (New York: E.P. Dutton/Walker Art Center, 1974)
5. *Missing Pieces: Georgia Folk Art 1776-1976* (Atlanta: Georgia Council for the Arts and Humanities, 1976)



Fig. 3. Howard Finster, *The Dead and Living Come Together*, Summerville, Georgia, 1984, photo by Willem Volkersz, Paradise Garden



Fig. 4. Howard Finster, *The Holy Dove of God*, 1983, nails and paint on wood, 11 3/4 x 14 1/4 x 4, photo by Tom Ferris

Diane, a ceramics artist, had met Willem in art school in Seattle. They had started buying antique quilt tops not long after they married, but that was the extent of their collecting through the mid-1970s. Then, in 1977, while Willem was on sabbatical, they took their infant son Jason on a tour of the South to meet some of the region's folk artists. Willem photographed the environments some of them had built, and he and Diane bought several pieces along the way. Those artist-to-artist transactions led to a major expansion of their collecting activities.

The Volkersz Collection was largely assembled over the next ten years, a period that saw an unprecedented expansion of popular interest in contemporary folk art. Presenting key pieces from the collection, *Strange and Wonderful* represents an opportunity to reflect on the field, reconsider some of its most widely known artists and admire many rarely seen pieces. In addition to familiar names, the show also includes works by several artists who haven't received widespread attention. A number of the works treat classic American folk-art themes, including nature, religion, rural and domestic life, sociopolitical circumstances, patriotism, and the commemoration of individual lives in portraiture. Others are more personal or fanciful in their content.

Like many other such collections assembled during the 1970s and '80s, Willem's and Diane's is weighted heavily toward artists from the South, where much of the folk-art field's attention was directed in those years. The region became a focal point for collectors simply because folk art was often in plain view there, displayed in the artists' yards or attached to the exteriors of their homes. This distinction can be accounted for in part by the region's mild climate, allowing for year-round outdoor labor and leisure activities. Another factor encouraging the production and outdoor placement of folk art in the South has been the endurance of African customs in the region's black communities—especially traditions pertaining to spiritual protection and power-projection. Such traditions, imported to the region with the slave trade, continue to inform the black "yard shows" found throughout the rural and urban South.⁶

The most widely celebrated southern folk artist during the post-Bicentennial years was Howard Finster, the hill-country preacher and handyman who transformed his waterlogged backyard near Summerville, Georgia, into a mini-paradise of artworks, salvaged objects and cultivated plants. (fig. 3) Finster started to attract a broad audience in the early 1980s, after he appeared on

6. For an in-depth analysis of the black yard-show tradition in the South, see Grey Gundaker and Judith McWillie, *No Space Hidden: The Spirit of African American Yard Work* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2005).

the *Tonight Show* and made paintings used to promote the rock bands R.E.M. and Talking Heads. He's represented in the exhibition by four pieces Willem and Diane bought from him as he was becoming a mass-media superstar, during the same period when I was interviewing him for a book about his life and work.⁷

The inscribed cutout-paper piece *My Wife Cautioned Me* is a template for one of the self-portraits Finster made in myriad variations. *The Holy Dove of God* is one of his many painted wood cutouts, distinguished by the painstaking "nail craft" passages on the bird's rock perch. (fig. 4) In addition to being relatively understated compared to much of Finster's art, both pieces highlight his working processes.

Another artist Willem and Diane met during their first trip south was Eddie Owens Martin. After spending more than 30 years in New York—where he reinvented himself as "Saint EOM," an exotically garbed psychic reader—Martin had returned in the 1950s to his native Georgia, and the farmhouse he inherited from his mother in Marion County. He spent the rest of his life transforming the four-acre property into "Pasaquan," an elaborate ritual space highlighted by brightly painted walls, relief sculptures and figural columns reminiscent of totem poles. (fig. 5) That's where Willem and Diane found him in 1977, when they bought his drawing identified here as *Log Cabin*.⁸ (fig. 6)

Dating from the period when Martin returned to Georgia, it's a somewhat fancifully stylized rendition of his mother's farmhouse as it originally appeared. The vertically elongated trees, bearing no resemblance to trees on the Martin property, instead resemble the cedars in Vincent Van Gogh's landscapes, which Martin admired. Their placement, however, accords with that of the oaks which for many years shaded the Martin homeplace. As with the previously cited works by Finster, Martin's *Log Cabin* is a restrained piece compared to most of his work. It's also relatively sophisticated in its use of perspective—a skill Martin derived from his exposure to "fine art" during his New York years.

Although he was white, Martin readily acknowledged an aesthetic debt to black culture. During his childhood as a sharecropper's son his playmates were black, and throughout his life he spoke with a strong black inflection. In New York he sought out books and documentary films about African art and ritual, which influenced the figures and design motifs he later incorporated into Pasaquan. Distinctive as he was among his contemporaries, Martin certainly wasn't alone among white southern artists taking cues from their black counterparts.



Fig. 5. Eddie Martin (aka St. EOM) at home in Buena Vista, GA , 1984, photo by Willem Volkersz



Fig. 6. Eddie Martin, *Log Cabin* , 1950s, ink on paper, 11 3/4 x 15 3/4, photo by Tom Ferris

7. Howard Finster and Tom Patterson, *Howard Finster, Stranger from Another World*, (New York: Abbeville Press, 1989).

8. See the author's *St. EOM in the Land of Pasaquan* (Winston-Salem: Jargon Society, 1987).



Fig. 7. Dilmus Hall, *Wait I See You*, early 1980s, ink and colored pencil on paper, 8 ½ x 10 ¾, photo by Tom Ferris



Fig. 8. Mary T. Smith with her paintings, Hazlehurst, Mississippi, 1984, photo by Willem Volkersz

During the southern excursions they started making in the late 1970s, Willem and Diane visited and collected works by a number of African American artists, including Zebedee Armstrong, Dilmus Hall, “Prophet” Royal Robertson, Nellie Mae Rowe, Mary Tillman Smith and Mose Tolliver. Several of these artists also created and maintained yard shows, which Willem documented.

Dilmus Hall, for example, decorated the exterior of his small concrete-block house in Athens, Georgia, with painted relief images, and the magnolia-shaded front yard with hand-molded concrete tableaux. These were inspired in part by public sculptures he had seen in Europe, where he had served in the Army during World War II, but the themes were of his own choosing. His largest outdoor tableau was a stark scene of an alcoholic’s temptation, *The Devil and the Drunk Man*. Next to his mailbox was a glass-fronted box he assembled to enshrine *The Shoe That Rode the Howling Tornado*, a piece of footwear he’d found in the wake of a violent storm. Hall also made small mixed-media sculptures depicting the Crucifixion and other subjects. His largest body of work consists of starkly composed, delicately rendered drawings like those Willem and Diane acquired from him. (fig. 7) These narrative vignettes depict scenes from the Bible, Hall’s personal experience or other situations, all typically involving characters whose activities are explained by captions or dialogue in his distinctive script.⁹

While Hall’s tiny house and art-filled yard were tucked away on a residential side street, Mary Tillman Smith’s home and yard show near Hazlehurst, Mississippi, were prominently situated alongside a heavily traveled stretch of U.S. Highway 51. (fig. 8) Smith, a marginally literate African American woman who had worked for many years as a tenant farmer and domestic servant, created intensely raw, expressionistic figural paintings. She attached them to the fence around her neatly mown lawn on the eastern side of the highway, making them impossible to miss. Willem noticed them while traveling through the area with a student in 1984, on which occasion he stopped, talked with Smith and photographed her yard. With his purchase of a few paintings from her, he became one of her earliest collectors.

Most of Smith’s paintings incorporate bold, phonetically spelled inscriptions referencing God, the Bible, rural and domestic subjects, or other aspects of her personal experience. Her painting in the exhibition depicts a quadruped that might be mistaken for a cow were it not for the accompanying inscription attesting to Smith’s fondness for eating “HOG MEET.”¹⁰ (fig. 9)

9. Additional information on Hall and insight into his work can be found in Maude Southwell Wahlman, “Blue Hands,” in *Souls Grown Deep: African American Vernacular Art of the South*, vol. 1 (Atlanta: Tinwood Books, 2000), pp. 218-223.

10. For more information on Smith and an astute analysis of her work, see William and Paul Arnett, *Souls Grown Deep: African American Vernacular Art of the South*, vol. 2 (Atlanta: Tinwood Books, 2001), pp. 112-139.

Around the same time Willem met Smith, he and Diane also learned of another southern, African American woman who made rawly expressionistic art—Juanita Rogers. Whereas Smith was a gregarious individual always eager to greet visitors, Rogers was a virtual recluse living alone in a tumbledown shack in a weed-choked field near the tiny community of Snowdown, Alabama. Rogers’ raw clay sculptures depicting strange animals and grotesque humanoid creatures were initially discovered in 1980 by a social worker who showed them to Anton Haardt, an artist and folk-art dealer in nearby Montgomery. (fig. 10) Haardt nurtured Rogers’ work and introduced it to collectors during what turned out to be the last years of Rogers’ life.

Rogers made her sculptures from red-clay mud mixed with broken glass, coffee grounds and teeth she salvaged from animal skulls found near her home, and she often used cow bones as armatures. After buying all of Rogers’ extant sculptures, Haardt determined that most were too fragile to interest collectors. Willem and Diane acquired one of the few Haardt let go, a two-horned biped with an inscrutable, open-mouthed countenance. It’s one of their collection’s rarest and most primally powerful pieces.

After Haardt supplied her with paper, paints and other materials, Rogers began to draw. Generally more lighthearted in content than her sculptures, her drawings found their way into a number of prominent collections. Most of the drawings depict scenes in which cartoonish human and animal characters enjoy picnics or outdoor parties. In the exhibited example, a girl shares a picnic with three canine companions that suggest more benign versions of Rogers’ sculpted creatures. Tragically, Rogers died of complications from an ovarian tumor in 1985, just as collectors were becoming acquainted with her work.¹¹ Willem and Diane never had an opportunity to meet her.

Juanita Rogers is one of many African American folk artists who have employed bones in their work. (Other examples include Osker Gilchrist and James Son Ford Thomas, who sometimes lined the mouths of his signature clay skulls with real human teeth). The practice may be related to African fetish traditions, whose most familiar manifestations in the United States are rabbit-foot and mojo charms.

A lesser-known African American artist who made creative use of bones is Arthur Frenchy, whose work came to Willem’s and Diane’s attention only after his death in 1975. Among 46 of his pieces they acquired from his widow through a third party is a group of miniature chairs made of chicken bones, often decoratively painted and in some cases augmented with collage or other small



Fig. 9. Mary T. Smith, *Hog Meet Good*, 1984, enamel on masonite, 16 x 24, photo by Tom Ferris



Fig. 10. Juanita Rogers, *Standing Creature*, c. 1980, unfired clay, hair, grasses, 10 1/4 x 6 3/4 x 5, photo by Tom Ferris

11. The author is grateful to Anton Haardt for access to her unpublished book-length manuscript about Rogers, the source for this essay’s information about her.



Fig. 11. Alva Dexhimer, *Portrait of a Woman with Red Hair*, c. 1983, paint on cardboard in polychromed frame, 21 3/4 x 19 1/4 x 1 1/4, photo by Willem Volkersz



Fig. 12. Alva Gene Dexhimer, *Double Portrait*, c. 1982, paint on cardboard, 9 x 17, photo by Tom Ferris

objects and materials. Researching Frenchy's background, the Volkerszes learned he was born in 1884 in Falls City, Nebraska, where a number of former slaves like his father settled after fleeing the South in the mid-19th century. They found evidence that Frenchy had been arrested for burglary in 1911, spent part of his life in Canada and worked for a time as a fuel-oil salesman, but they turned up no substantive information about his art.

Willem has noted a possible connection between Frenchy's bone chairs and African traditions by which chairs can serve as power symbols or seats reserved for ancestor spirits. It bears noting that chicken-bone chairs are not unique to Frenchy, nor are they exclusively made by black artists. (At least one white American folk artist, Eugene Von Bruenchenhein, created an extensive series of painted chicken-bone chairs and thrones, among his several bodies of work in different mediums.¹² Lending support to a possible African derivation for Frenchy's bone chairs, though, are several sticks atop which he mounted small animal skulls augmented with dolls' eyes in the sockets. Willem initially assumed they were walking canes, but cultural historian Maude Southwell Wahlman identified them as conjuring sticks, akin to those employed by traditional healers in parts of Africa.¹³

While a number of other artists ("Prophet" William Blackmon, Rex Butler, Ned Cartledge, L. W. Crawford, Carlton Garrett, Robert Gilkerson, M. L. Owen, Benjamin F. Perkins and Ernest Puro) are represented in *Strange and Beautiful*, the exhibition places particular emphasis on three Missouri folk artists whose work Willem and Diane have collected in depth—Alva Gene Dexhimer, Mark Negus and Robert Eugene Smith. Together their works make up half of the exhibition. Coincidentally, all three artists suffered from mental problems—not uncommon among contemporary folk artists. The Volkerszes became aware of their work through different sets of circumstances in the early 1980s.

It was Alva Gene Dexhimer's yard display that alerted them to his work, thanks to a friend who directed them there. Dexhimer lived with his brother in Syracuse, Missouri, in a mobile home surrounded by his sculptures and functional objects made largely of wood. The property also contained a shed where he stored the paintings he made on scraps of cardboard and other materials. (fig. 11) Mentally disabled due to a childhood head injury, he had always loved to draw. His straightforward imagery is based on published illustrations and invariably rendered in the boldly outlined style of the comic books he enjoyed. He's represented in the exhibition primarily by examples of his

12. Photographs of Von Bruenchenhein's chicken-bone chairs appear in Leslie Umberger, *Sublime Spaces & Visionary Worlds: Built Environments of Vernacular Artists* (New York & Sheboygan: Princeton Architectural Press and John Michael Kohler Arts Center, 2007), p. 269.

13. E-mail to the author from Willem Volkersz, April 24, 2013.

reductively stylized portraiture, along with several of his small, painted-wood constructions. Sadly, Dexhimer died of a stroke in 1984, and the Volkerszes bought most of these works posthumously. (fig. 12)

Mark Negus introduced himself to Willem and Diane with a small woodcarving enclosed with a letter he sent them after reading an article about their collection. (fig. 13) The resulting exchange developed into a close friendship, and to their acquisition of numerous examples of his work. The intimate scale of his introductory gift carving is typical of his art. His woodcarvings are distinctive in their combinations of figures with decorative elements probably influenced by his fondness for Victorian ornament. His paintings, drawings, prints and handmade books, meanwhile, are more stylistically varied, and his painted metalwork pieces are particularly idiosyncratic. Then there are his wonderfully quirky titles, such as *A Fabulist's Puppet for Thoughts from the Deep*, *An Alteration in the Formula of the Harlequin Romance Novels* and *Cornucopian Plough and Kettle Drumball Corps*. (fig. 14) Negus' works reflect a whimsical spirit and a sophisticated awareness of literature, art and history, especially pertaining to the 19th century, his favorite historical period. Despite the sharp wit, keen intelligence and literary inclinations reflected in his letters to Willem

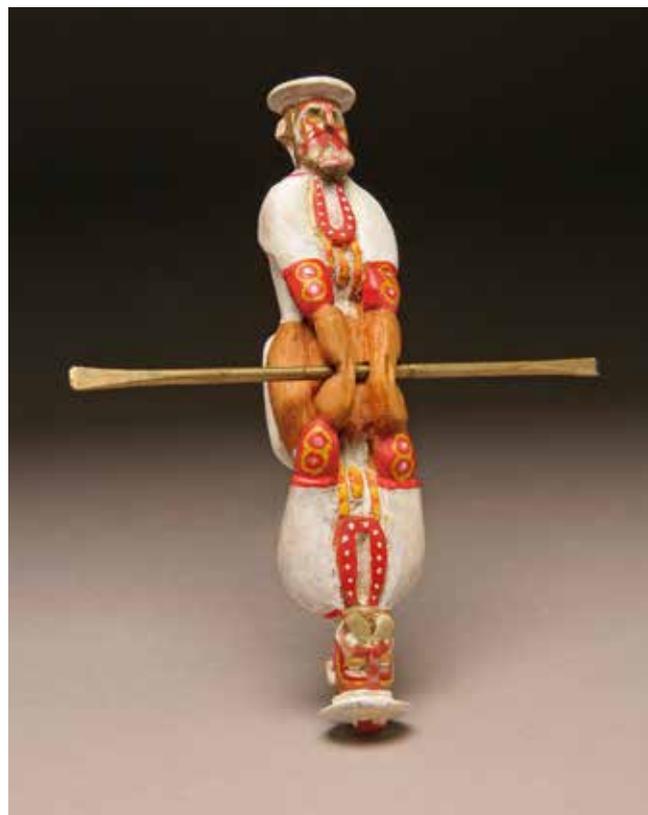


Fig. 13. Mark Negus, Chanty , 1984, painted wood, 1 x 4 ½ x 4, photo by Tom Ferris

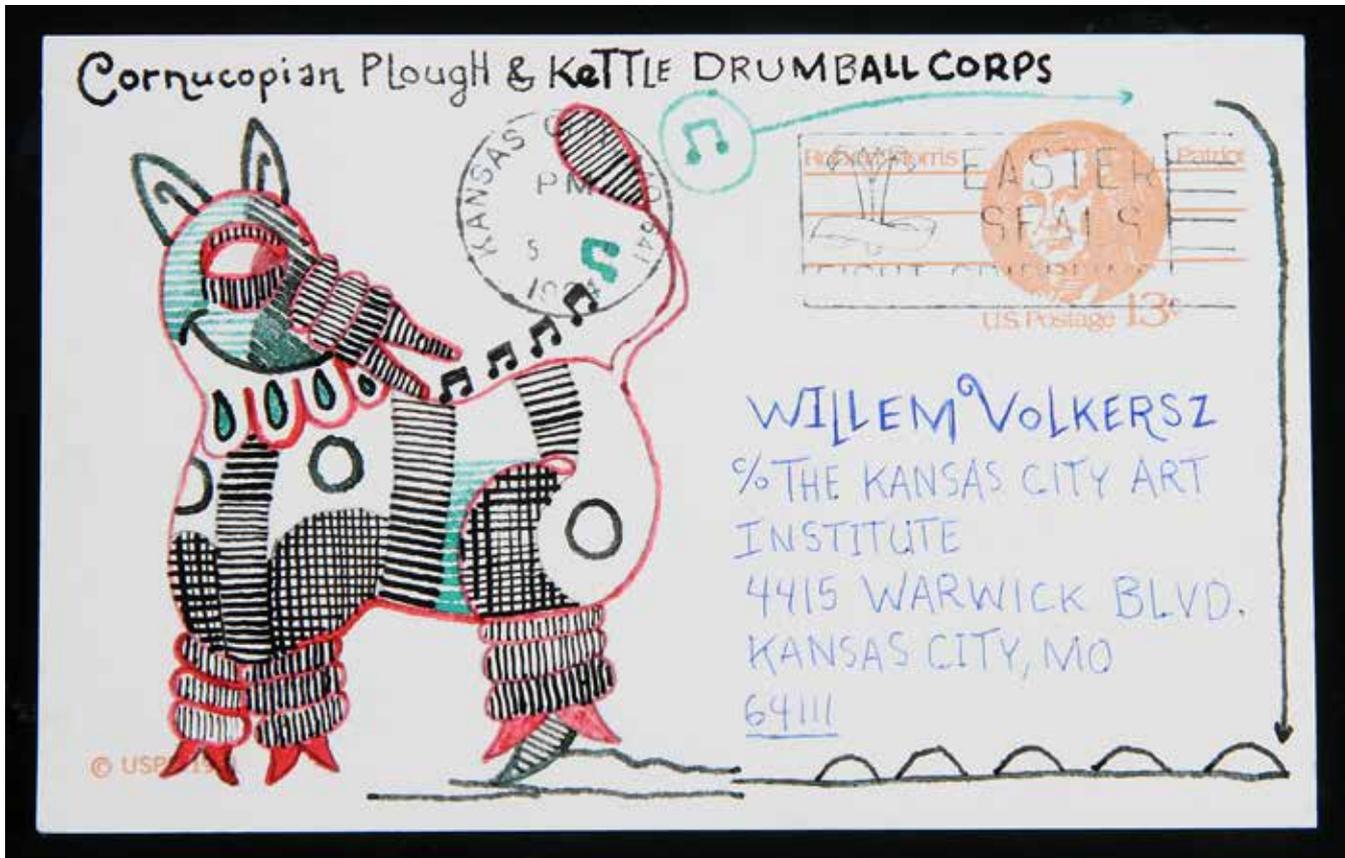


Fig. 14. Mark Negus, Cornucopian Plough & Kettle Drumball Corps, 1984, ink on postcard, 3 ½ x 5 ½, photo by Tom Ferris



Fig. 15. Robert E. Smith, *Schizophrenia Ward #39*, 1983, pencil, acrylic, pen and ink on illustration board, 30 x 40, photo by Tom Ferris

and Diane, he has been unable to live independently or hold down a job due to a mental illness, possibly resulting from head injuries he suffered in the 1970s.¹⁴

Like Negus, Robert Eugene Smith introduced himself to Willem and Diane with a letter accompanying one of his works in the mail. It became the first of many paintings they acquired from him, and—as with Negus—the exchange also led to a warm friendship. An aspiring actor and writer as well as an artist, Smith was diagnosed as schizophrenic at 23 and placed in a state hospital in St. Louis until he was released at 41 in 1968. He began painting while institutionalized. His painting *Schizophrenia Ward #39* is based on his experiences during that phase of his life. (fig. 15) After his release Smith lived in subsidized housing and supported himself on income from sales of his art and social-security disability payments. In 1975 he moved to Springfield, Missouri, where he spent the rest of his life.

14. Biographical information about Negus and selected excerpts from Negus' letters to the Volkerszes are included in Willem's unpublished article "Mark Negus: The Travail of a mid-Victorian Adrift in a Computer Age." Additional information about Negus is from the author's e-mail exchange with Willem on April 29, 2013.

Smith's paintings are densely packed with narrative information. Through his placement of human and animal characters, landscape or interior details and miscellaneous objects, not to mention his frequent use of a bird's-eye perspective, the paintings read as complete stories. Whatever the specific content, each scene is almost always crowded and raucous, although carefully staged, and further enlivened by an exuberant sense of color. His bright, boldly outlined imagery reflects an affinity for comic-strip art, and his approach to composition brings to mind traditional memory paintings, although

his paintings are inspired not only by his memories but also by his imagination and various print sources. Most of his paintings are accompanied by handwritten stories describing the action in them, as well as audiotapes of himself reading the stories aloud, complete with sound effects. He continued painting until shortly before his death at 82 in 2010.¹⁵ (fig. 16)

Smith was one of the few artists whose work Willem and Diane continued to sporadically collect after they left Kansas City in 1986 for Montana. The move brought an end to their years of traveling around the country



Fig. 16. Robert E. Smith, President Reagan's Visit to Wambatu Island , c. 1981, acrylic, pen and ink on canvas, 18 x 24, photo by Tom Ferris

15. Jenny Fillmer, "Robert E. Smith, Springfield Folk Artist, October 14, 1927 - February 13, 2010, Springfield, MO," online obituary at roberteugenessmith.blogspot.com.

to meet folk artists and actively collecting their work. They remained involved in the field, but they shifted their energies from collecting to sharing their collection through exhibitions like this one, at museums and art centers around the country. Willem continued to write and lecture about folk art, and to pursue related documentary work on occasion, most significantly in 1991, when he traveled around Europe photographing folk-art environments on a Fulbright Fellowship.

By that time the folk-art field had grown tremendously, been increasingly commercialized and undergone other changes, not least of which was a raising of the stakes. New folk-art galleries opened in New York, Chicago, Atlanta and a number of other cities, and prices increased significantly as the art began to attract wealthy private collectors able to pay far more than the trained artists and university art professors who had previously been the field's main collectors. The first Outsider Art Fair opened in New York in 1993, commencing an international series that was to continue bringing the field's major dealers and collectors to the city every year. By that point,

the field's range was broadening, with a corresponding shift of focus away from the southern artists who had previously dominated the attention of American collectors. Increasing emphasis was placed on European artists like Adolph Wölfli and others whose work Jean Dubuffet had 50 years earlier championed as *art brut*—and to posthumously discovered American “outsiders,” such as Henry Darger and Martin Ramirez. It was clearly the beginning of a new era for the field.¹⁶

In light of these developments and further changes over the last 20 years, the Volkertsz Collection serves as a kind of time capsule, radiantly illuminating an important transitional period in American folk-art history. It's an extraordinary gathering of works by a remarkable group of artists, most of them no longer living. The collection merits strong appreciation for its own sake—it's a wonder to behold—while also yielding substantial insight into the cultural concerns and aesthetic preoccupations of what might be called the classic era of contemporary American folk art.

16. For the author's extended analysis of the folk-art field's transformation over the last quarter of the 20th century, see “Dust Storms in the Parallel Art Universe: Reflections on 25 years in the Self-taught/‘Outsider’ Art Field,” *Art Papers*, Vol. 25.6, Nov./Dec. 2001, pp. 36-42.

Tom Patterson has been writing about art and curating art exhibitions since the early 1980s. His writings have appeared in national and international art magazines including *afterimage*, *American Ceramics*, *American Craft*, *Aperture*, *ARTnews*, *BOMB*, *New Art Examiner*, and *Public Art Review*. As an independent curator he has organized group and solo exhibitions for institutions including the American Visionary Art Museum (Baltimore), the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (Winston-Salem), the Terra Museum of American Art (Chicago) and the Center on Contemporary Art (Seattle). He is also the author of *Howard Finster: Stranger from Another World* (Abbeville Press, 1989), *St. EOM in The Land of Pasaquan* (Jargon Society, 1987) and *Contemporary Folk Art: Treasures from the Smithsonian American Art Museum* (Watson-Guptill Publications, 2001) Formerly the U.S. editor of *Raw Vision*, the London-based international journal of outsider art, he currently serves as a U.S. editorial contributor to that magazine. His latest book is the catalog for *Farfetched: Mad Science, Fringe Architecture and Visionary Engineering*, co-authored and co-curated with Roger Manley for exhibition at North Carolina State University's Gregg Museum of Art & Design in Raleigh (January-April 2013).

Plates



Plate 1) Ned Cartledge
Citizen's Gripes
1981
oil paint on carved wood
20 x 18



Plate 2) Alva Gene Dexhimer
Cat Sand
c. 1982
paint on chipboard
15 ½ x 12



Plate 3) Alva Gene Dexhimer
Portrait of a Soldier
date unknown
mixed media on paper
9 ³/₈ x 8 ¹/₂



Plate 4) Alva Gene Dexhimer
Guitar
date unknown
wood, plastic, copper wire
10 x 5 1/4 x 7 1/4

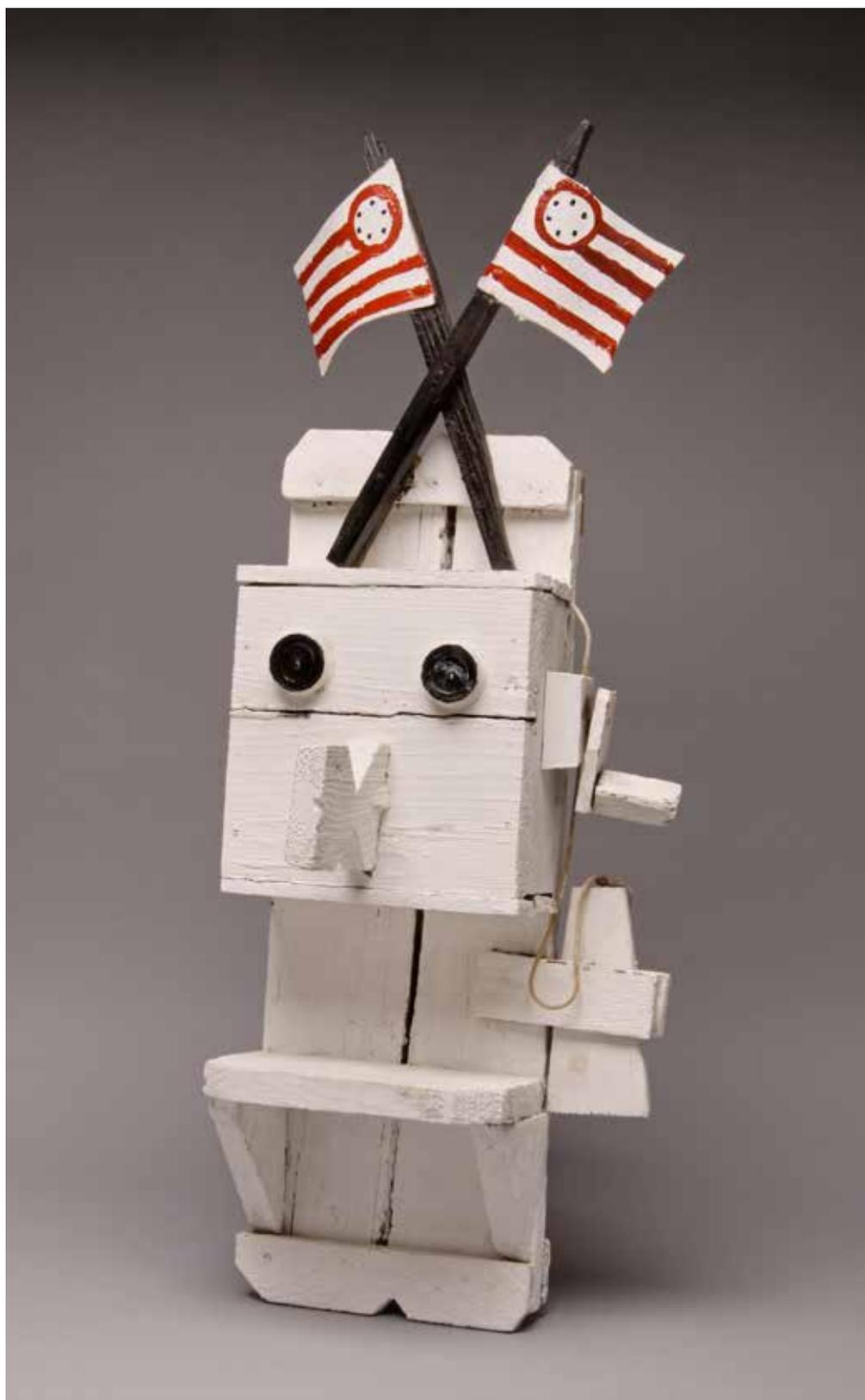


Plate 5) Alva Gene Dexhimer
Telephone
1980s
wood, paint, canvas, found objects
26 x 10 x 8



Plate 6) Alva Gene Dexhimer
Cowboy on Toaster
date unknown
wood, paint, wire, plastic, bottle cap, toaster
20 x 11 1/2 x 5 1/2



Plate 8) Howard Finster
I Display Inventions
1970s
paint on metal
12 3/16 x 18 1/16



Plate 9) Arthur Frency
Small Chair with Native Peoples Collage
early 1960s
painted chicken bones, wood and collage
4 x 5 x 5



Plate 10) Arthur Frenchy
Small Chair with Native Peoples Collage (detail)
early 1960s
painted chicken bones, wood and collage
4 x 5 x 5



Plate 11) Arthur Frency
Chair with Plastic Bird
early 1960s
painted chicken bones & collage
14 1/2 x 13 1/4 x 8



Plate 12) Cass Frisby
Golfer
1972
paint on canvasboard
22 x 28

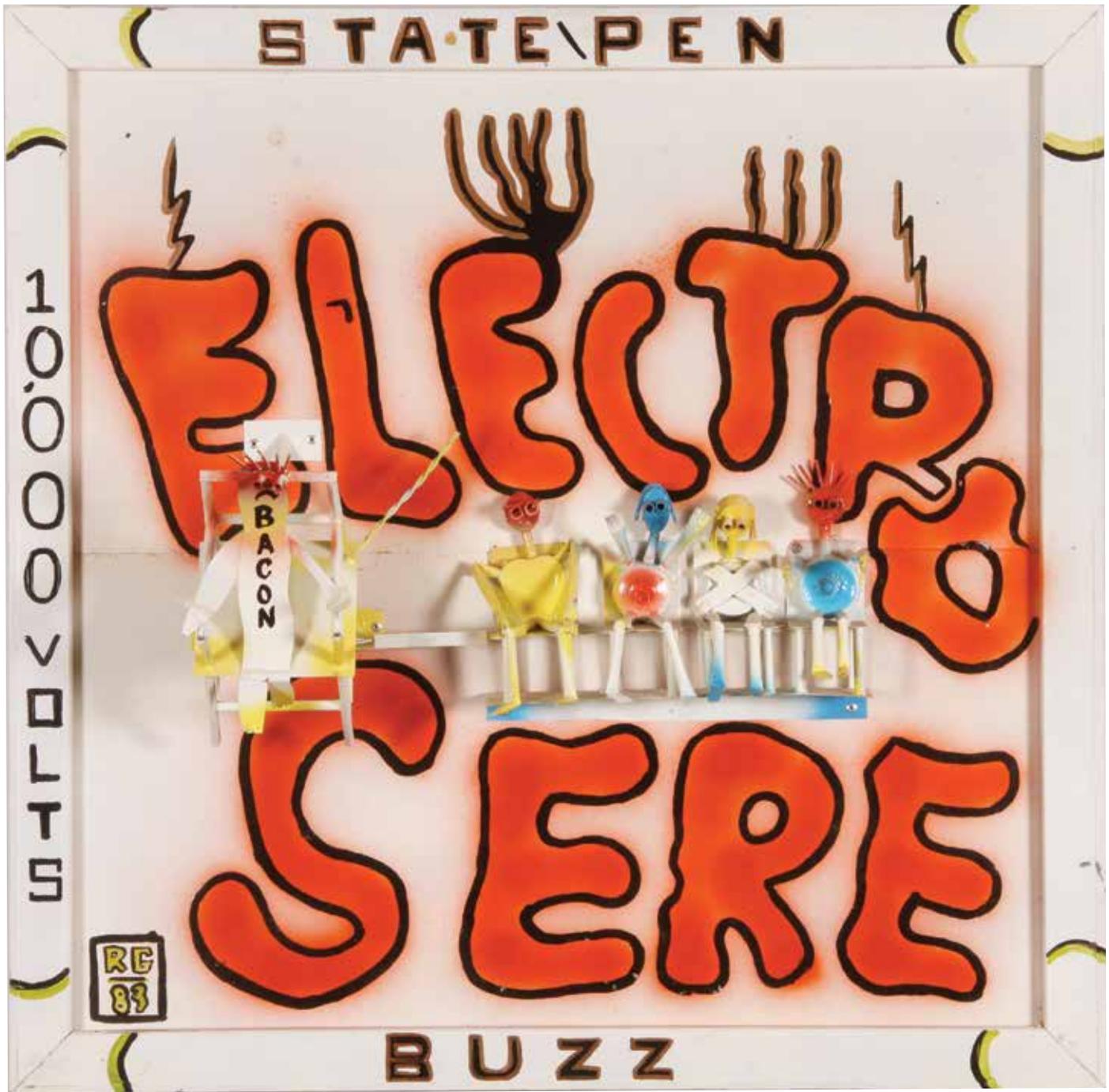


Plate 13) Robert Gilkerson
Electro Sere
1983
painted sheet metal & wood frame
28 x 28 x 6

HEAD HUNTER'S TO THE MEMORY OF DR. GREENE D. McCALL

QUOTE. JESUS SAID UNTO HER. I AM THE RESURRECTION. AND THE LIFE: HE THAT BELIEVETH IN ME, THOUGH HE WERE DEAD, YET SHALL HE LIVE. ST. JOHN. II-25.

QUOTE. AND WHOSOEVER LIVETH AND BELIEVETH IN ME SHALL NEVER DIE, BELIEVEST THOU THIS? VER. 26.

WHAT BECOME OF JOHN THE BAPTIST HEAD? YES: JOHN WAS BOUND. & IN PRISON: JOHN'S HEAD WAS CUT OFF AND BROUGHT IN A CHARGER. AND THEN HANDED TO A PRETTY WOMAN. AND NOBODY KNOWS UNTO THIS DAY. WHAT BECOME OF JOHN THE BAPTIST HEAD? FOR MORE DETAILS. READ. MATTHEW. CHAP-14. **DR. GREENE D. McCALL. DID GET A LITTLE BETTER TREATMENT** THEN JOHN DID. THEY DID BURY THE DOCTORS HEAD WITH HIS BODY.

Plate 14) Jesse Howard
Head Hunters
c. 1950s
paint on metal
25 ¼ x 35

I AM FOR PEACE, < BUT WHEN I SPEAK, <
THEY ARE FOR WAR, PSALMS, 120=VERSE. 7.

THE WORD DOG IS FOUND IN 31
VERSES IN THE BIBLE.

BEWARE OF DOGS, < BEWARE OF EVIL

DOERS, PHILIPPIANS, 3=2,

Dog, DOGS SHALL NOT MOVE THEIR TONGUES

AGAINST MAN, < EXODUS, 11=7.

Dog, PRICE OF DOG, < DEUTERONOMY, < 23=18.

Dog, DOG LAPPETH WATER, < JUDGES, 7=5.

Dog, IS THY SERVANT A DOG? < 2. KINGS, 8=13.

Dog, DOGS EAT OF ~~JEZABELL~~ JEREBOM, <
1.ST KINGS, 14=11.

Dog, AM I A DOG'S HEAD? < 2.ND SAMUEL 8=8.

Dog, A DEAD DOG, < AS I AM, < 2.ND SAMUEL 9=8.

Dog, AM I A DOG? < 1.ST SAMUEL, 17=43.

Dog, A DOG'S OWN VOMIT, < 1.ST PETER, 2=22.

Dog, AS A DOG RETURNETH TO HIS VOMIT, <

SO A FOOL RETURNETH TO HIS FOLLY, < PROVERBS 26=11.

Dog, TAKETH A DOG BY THE EARS, < PROVERBS, 26=17.

Dog, DOGS LICKED > BLOOD OF NABOTH, <

A NOTORIOUS BAD MAN, 1.ST KINGS, 21=18.

Dog, DOGS SHALL EAT JEZABELL, < A

NOTORIOUS BAD WOMAN, < 1.ST KINGS, 21=23.

Dog, WITH THAT DIETH OF ANAB IN THE CITY

SHALL THE DOGS EAT, < 1.ST KINGS, 21=24.

FULTON, MO. JUNE 15, 1974. AND JESSE HOWARD. IS MY NAME.
FREE THOUGHT, FREE SPEECH. "DEAR, MR. PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON,
AND FAMILY. WELL "THE WHOLE WORLD." WE PEOPLE ARE GOING
THROUGH THE MOST >PERILOUS TIME'S, TIME S, IN THE HISTORY OF THIS GREAT
WORLD." IT IS WITH US TODAY, PERILOUS TIMES. QUOTE. THIS KNOW ALSO,
THAT IN THE LAST DAYS >PERILOUS TIMES SHALL COME." SEE. 2ND TIMO-
THY. CHAPTER. 3. READ IT, AND BELIEVE IT. READ ON, AND 'ON." I AM A MAN
SMALL IN STATURE. WEIGHT, 120 POUND. HIGHT 5 FT 4 INCHES. JUST HAD A
BIRTH DAY. JUNE. 4TH AT AGE, 89. I ONLY HAVE A SIXTH GRADE "EDUCATION"
COLLEGE. "I WALKED IN THE FRONT DOOR, OF WEST MINISTER COLLEGE.
"AND OUT THE BACK DOOR." DOES WEST MINISTER COLLEGE? OR
ANY OTHER COLLEGE? HAVE A RECORD OF ANY PERSON, LETTING EDUCATED
IN AS SHORT A SPACE OF TIME? YES, IN MY WRITING I WILL "SWEAR
IN TRUTH" QUOTE. THE LORD HATH SWORN IN TRUTH UNTO DAVID: HE WILL
NOT TURN FROM IT; OF THE FRUIT OF THY BODY WILL I SET UPON THY THRONE."
PSALMS. 132. 11. QUOTE. WHO SMOTE GREAT NATIONS, AND SLEW MIGHTY
>KING'S: SION KING OF THE AMORITES, AND OL. KING OF BASHAN, AND ALL
THE KINGDOMS OF CANAAN. PSALMS. 133. 10. SEE. "DEUTERONOMY. CHAPTERS. 2 AND
3." AND READ ABOUT THE BIG GIANTS "IN OUR LAND." WHEN CHARLES DEGA-
LLA "WAS AT THE WHITE HOUSE." HE, DELALLA, WAS OF THE GIANT FAMILY. "THEY
HAD TROUBLE FINDING A BED: WIDE ENOUGH, AND LONG ENOUGH" FOR HIM TO SLE-
EP ON. "I DONT KNOW WHOETHER HE WAS ANY KIN TO KING OL. OR NOT."
KING OL "KING OF BASHAN REMAINED OF THE REMNANT OF LIANTS: BE HOLD,
HIS BEDSTEAD WAS A BEDSTEAD OF IRON; IS IT NOT IN RAB BATH OF THE CHILDREN
OF AMMON? NINE CUBITS WAS THE LENGTH THEREOF, AND FOUR CUBITS
THE BREADTH OF IT, AFTER THE CUBIT OF A MAN. DEUTERONOMY. 3: 11: BY.
JESSE HOWARD. WHO SMOTE KING OL? MOSES, SMOTE KING OL. "JOSHUA. 13: 12
WHO BURNT AI? JOSHUA. BURNT AI. AND MADE IT AN HEAP FOR EVER, EVEN A
DESOLATION UNTO THIS DAY. JOSHUA. 8: 28: VERIOUS KING'S AND CITIES
CONQUERED: BY JOSHUA. "SEE CHAPTERS, 10TH VERSES: 10=11=12=13. READ ON.
WHO HANDED THE 5 KING'S THAT WAS HID IN THE CAVE AND HANGED THEM
ON 5 TREES? JOSHUA: HANDED THE 5 KING'S: "JOSHUA: 10: 22=23=24=25=26
27. READ ON. JOSHUA. HANDED THE FIVE KING'S: KING OF JERUSALEM: THE KING OF
HEBRON, THE KING OF JARMUTH, THE KING OF LACHISH, AND THE KING OF ELLON,
AND THE KING OF JERICHO. JOSHUA: 10: 28. READ ON. JOSHUA'S DEATH, AND
BURIAL: "JOSHUA. CHAPTER. 24. "JOSHUA. DIED AT AGE, 110. YEAR S. OLD. "QUO. TAKE HEAD-
DE'S OF PEOPLE" AND >HANG THEM. "NUMBERS: 25=4. AND READ ON, AND ON."
WHO SLEW THE BIG LIANT? GOLIATH, OF LATH, WHOSE HEIGHT WAS SIX CUBITS"
AND A SPAN. ANSWER, KING DAVID SLEW THE BIG LIANT: "PHILISTINE: NAMED GOL-
ATH OF LATH. "KING DAVID'S FATHER'S NAME, JESSE: AND JESSE HAD EIGHT SONS,
AND DAVID WAS THE YOUNGEST, BUT MORE CUNNING, THEN THE OTHERS: "DAVID, COUL-
D PLAY THE HARP, WHEN THE OTHER BOYS COULDN'T. DAVID PLAYED HARP. 1ST SAM. 16: 23
KING DAVID; AND THE BIG CHAMPION. 1ST SAM. 17: 4. READ ON. DAVID AND HIS FATHER'S SHEEP.
DAVID LEFT SHEEP. VER. 20. DAVID TALKS. VER. 32. "THE KING WILL ENRICH. READ ON. FEW SHEEP
IN THE WILDERNESS: DAVID A YOUTH: FATHER'S SHEEP. READ ON. DAVID AND THE ROCK. 1ST SAM. 17: 45
READ ON. DAVID CUT OFF HIS HEAD: VERSE 51. WHAT DID DAVID DO WITH GOLIATH'S HEAD?
ANSWER: AND DAVID TOOK THE HEAD OF THE PHILISTINE, AND BROUGHT IT TO JERUSA-
LEM; BUT HE PUT HIS ARMOUR IN HIS TENT. QUO. AND WHEN SAUL SAW DAVID GO FORTH
AGAINST THE PHILISTINE, HE SAID UNTO ABNER, THE CAPTAIN OF THE HOST, ABNER WHOSE SON IS THIS? OUTRE
AND ABNER SAID, AS THY SOUL LIVETH, O KING, I CANNOT TELL, AND THE KING SAID, INQUIRE THOU
WHOSE SON THE STRIPLING IS. QUO. AND AS DAVID RETURNED FROM THE SLAUGHTER OF THE
PHILISTINE, ABNER TOOK HIM, AND BROUGHT HIM BEFORE SAUL WITH THE HEAD OF THE PHILISTINE
IN HIS HAND. VER. 57. AND SAUL SAID TO HIM, WHOSE SON ART THOU, THOU YOUNG MAN? AND DAVID
ANSWERED, I AM THE SON OF THY SERVANT JESSE THE BETH-LEHEMITE. 1ST SAMUEL: 17: 56. READ
ON, AND ON. BY JESSE HOWARD. THE SILN PAINTER. FULTON, MO. THE AMERICANITE. OR MITE.

Plate 16) Jesse Howard
Dear Mr. President Nixon
1974
paint on canvas
58 x 39



Plate 17) Andrew Johnson
Abandon Ship!
c. 1930
oil paint on board
22 x 34 1/2



Plate 18) Mark Negus
A Fabulist's Puppet for Thoughts from the Deep
1981
carved wood
5 x 4 x 1 ¼



Plate 19) Mark Negus
An Alteration in the Formula of the Harlequin Romance Novels
c. 1980s
watercolor and ink on paper
4 ³/₄ x 5 ³/₁₆



Plate 20) Mark Negus
The Tree That Kissed Itself
1986
oil on canvas
7 x 5



Plate 21) Benjamin F. Perkins
All American Jumbo Airmail
1980s
paint on metal mailbox
11 1/2 x 7 x 21



Plate 22) Benjamin F. Perkins
Let Jesus Rule Our H[e]art
1980s
painted gourd
12 x 10 x 10



Plate 23) Ernest Puro
Mother and Child
1971
carved stone on concrete base
9 x 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 3 $\frac{1}{2}$



Plate 24) Nellie Mae Rowe
Try God
c. 1977
ballpoint and crayon on paper
7 5/8 x 6 1/8



Plate 25) Robert E. Smith
Alcatraz
1984
acrylic, pen and ink on canvas
36 x 48

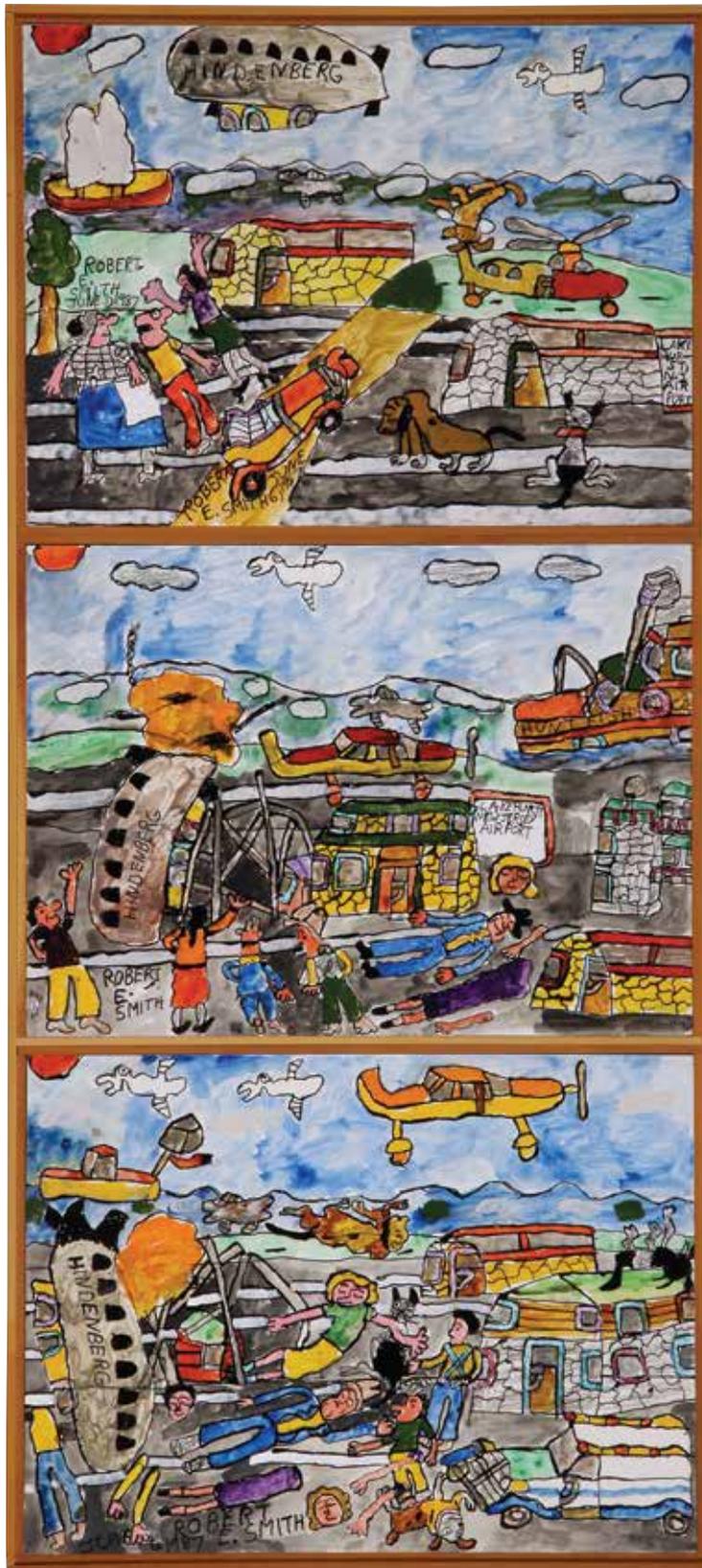


Plate 26) Robert E. Smith
The Hindenberg Disaster
1987
acrylic, pen and ink on illustration board
50 x 15



Plate 27) Carol Tinnin
Christmas
1984
colored pencil on paper
22 ½ x 28 ½



Plate 28) Mose Tolliver and L. W. Crawford
Plants, Cross and Sun
c. 1985
paint and matchsticks on wood
14 x 23 x ¾

Exhibition Checklist

Note: all work is from the collection of Willem and Diane Volkersz.
For measurements, height precedes width, then depth.

Armstrong, Zebedee (Georgia) <i>Three Calendars</i> 1987/1990 marking pen on cardboard & paper 18 x 32 (framed)	Crawford, L. W. and Mose Tolliver (Alabama) <i>Heart and Crosses</i> c. 1985 matchsticks & glitter on wood 14 x 23 x ¼	Dexhimer, Alva Gene (Missouri) <i>Portrait of a Woman with White Hair</i> c. 1983 paint on cardboard in polychromed frame 21 ½ x 19 ⅝ x 1 ¼
Blackmon, Prophet William (Wisconsin) <i>God's House</i> late 1980s paint on plywood 28 x 20	Dexhimer, Alva Gene (Missouri) <i>Woman with Bird and Flashlight</i> c. 1982 paint on chipboard 14 ¾ x 12	Dexhimer, Alva Gene (Missouri) <i>Red Girl</i> early 1980s mixed media on paperboard 12 x 10
Butler, Rex (Missouri) <i>Virgo—Now You Know Why She Never Married</i> c. 1982 sand 11 x 9	Dexhimer, Alva Gene (Missouri) <i>Big Cat</i> c. 1982 paint on paperboard 10 x 20	Dexhimer, Alva Gene (Missouri) <i>Sun Maid Raisins</i> early 1980s paint on paperboard 12 x 10
Cartledge, Ned (Georgia) <i>Citizen's Gripes</i> 1981 oil paint on carved wood 20 x 18	Dexhimer, Alva Gene (Missouri) <i>Black Woman</i> c. 1982 paint on cardboard 9 ½ x 8 ¼	Dexhimer, Alva Gene (Missouri) <i>Two Pictures of the Lord</i> date unknown ballpoint on paper 11 x 8 ½ each
Cartledge, Ned (Georgia) <i>Hooker's Green</i> 1980 oil paint on carved wood 27 ¼ x 15 ⅛	Dexhimer, Alva Gene (Missouri) <i>Cat Sand</i> c. 1982 paint on chipboard 15 ½ x 12	Dexhimer, Alva Gene (Missouri) <i>Portrait of a Woman with Black Hair</i> c. 1983 paint on cardboard in polychromed frame 21 ½ x 19 ⅝ x 1 ¼
Crawford, L. W. (Alabama) <i>God Never Fails</i> 1964 matchboxes, matches, glitter, paper, ink, foil 16 x 11 ½ x 1 ½	Dexhimer, Alva Gene (Missouri) <i>Col Zone</i> c. 1982 paint on paperboard 11 ½ x 10	Dexhimer, Alva Gene (Missouri) <i>Double Portrait</i> c. 1982 paint on cardboard 9 x 17
Crawford, L. W. (Alabama) <i>Small Cross</i> c. 1988 matchboxes, matches, cardboard, glitter 10 ½ x 5 ¾ x ¾	Dexhimer, Alva Gene (Missouri) <i>Dog</i> c. 1983 colored pencil on cardboard 18 ½ x 20 ½	Dexhimer, Alva Gene (Missouri) <i>Cowboy #1</i> date unknown wood, paint, plastic, found object 12 ¼ x 8 x 5
Crawford, L. W. (Alabama) <i>Large Cross</i> c. 1988 matchboxes, cardboard, glitter 19 ½ x 12 ¼ x 1 ¾	Dexhimer, Alva Gene (Missouri) <i>Portrait of a Soldier</i> date unknown mixed media on paper 9 ⅜ x 8 ½	Dexhimer, Alva Gene (Missouri) <i>Figure with Paddle</i> date unknown wood, paint, plastic, found object 13 x 8 x 8
Crawford, L. W. (Alabama) <i>Two Crosses ("Love" and "The Love God")</i> 1985 matchboxes, matchsticks, cardboard 28 x 17 (framed)	Dexhimer, Alva Gene (Missouri) <i>Portrait of a Woman with Red Hair</i> c. 1983 paint on cardboard in polychromed frame 21 ¾ x 19 ¼ x 1 ¼	Dexhimer, Alva Gene (Missouri) Guitar date unknown wood, plastic, copper wire 10 x 5 ¼ x 7 ¼

Dexhimer, Alva Gene (Missouri) <i>Telephone</i> 1980s wood, paint, canvas, found objects 28 x 10 x 8	Frenchy, Arthur (Kansas) <i>Chair with Curved Back</i> early 1960s painted chicken bones & collage 11 x 7 x 9	Hall, Dilmus (Georgia) <i>Wait I See You</i> early 1980s ink and colored pencil on paper 8 ½ x 10 ¾
Dexhimer, Alva Gene (Missouri) <i>Figure with Dollar Flag</i> date unknown wood, paint, canvas, found object 13 ½ x 7 ¾ x 8 ½	Frenchy, Arthur (Kansas) <i>Small Chair with Costume Jewelry</i> early 1960s chicken bones, cardboard, paint, collage & found objects 9 x 5 ½ x 4 ½	Howard, Jesse (Missouri) <i>Dear Mr. President Nixon</i> 1974 paint on canvas 58 x 39
Dexhimer, Alva Gene (Missouri) <i>Figure with Cross</i> c. 1983 wood, paint, plastic 27 ½ x 11 x 24	Frenchy, Arthur (Kansas) <i>Small Chair with Native Peoples Collage</i> early 1960s painted chicken bones and wood & collage 4 x 5 x 5	Howard, Jesse (Missouri) <i>Fish</i> circa 1950s paint on leather 3 ⅛ x 19 ¼
Dexhimer, Alva Gene (Missouri) <i>Cowboy on Toaster</i> date unknown wood, paint, wire, plastic, bottle cap, toaster 20 x 11 ½ x 5 ½	Frisby, Cass (Kansas) <i>Golfer</i> 1972 paint on canvasboard 22 x 28	Howard, Jesse (Missouri) <i>Head Hunters</i> circa 1950s paint on metal 25 ¼ x 35
Finster, Howard (Georgia) <i>My Wife Cautioned Me</i> 1970s marking pen on paper 17 ½ x 12 ⅝	Garrett, Carlton (Georgia) <i>Family Portrait</i> c. 1984 painted wood 7 ½ x 4 x 12	Howard, Jesse (Missouri) <i>My Motto Is...</i> 1950s ballpoint and colored pencil on index cards 21 x 21 (framed)
Finster, Howard (Georgia) <i>The Holy Dove of God</i> 1983 nails and paint on wood 11 ¾ x 14 ¼ x 4	Gilkerson, Robert (California) <i>Electro Sere</i> 1983 painted sheetmetal & wood frame 28 x 28 x 6	Howard, Jesse (Missouri) <i>Nudist Colony Inside</i> 1955 writing tablet with newspaper clippings & colored pencil 10 x 8
Finster, Howard (Georgia) <i>The Devil's Vice</i> 1984 paint on wood 18 ½ x 16 ½	Hall, Dilmus (Georgia) <i>Going to Egypt to Buy Corn</i> early 1980s ink and colored pencil on paper 11 x 14	Howard, Jesse (Missouri) <i>The Word Dog</i> 1950s colored pencil on writing tablet page 10 x 8
Finster, Howard (Georgia) <i>I Display Inventions</i> 1970s paint on metal 12 ¾ x 18 ⅙	Hall, Dilmus (Georgia) <i>Job and Satan</i> early 1980s ink and colored pencil on paper 8 ½ x 10 ¾	Johnson, Andrew (Montana) <i>Tornado</i> c. 1930 oil paint on board, 26 x 22
Frenchy, Arthur (Kansas) <i>Chair with Plastic Bird</i> early 1960s painted chicken bones & collage 14 ½ x 13 ¼ x 8	Hall, Dilmus (Georgia) <i>Meyou</i> early 1980s ink and colored pencil on paper 14 x 17	Johnson, Andrew (Montana) <i>Abandon Ship!</i> c. 1930 oil paint on board 22 x 34 ½

- Martin, Eddie (Georgia)
Log Cabin
1950s
ink on paper
11 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 15 $\frac{3}{4}$
- Negus, Mark (Missouri)
A Fabulist's Puppet for Thoughts from the Deep
1981
carved wood
5 x 4 x 1 $\frac{1}{4}$
- Negus, Mark (Missouri)
A Proper Pauper's Pea Spoon
1981
carved yellow poplar
5 x 1 x 1
- Negus, Mark (Missouri)
A Sparring Commemoration (Charles Dickens)
1982
carved and painted wood, brass, embroidered ribbon
6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 1 x 1
- Negus, Mark (Missouri)
An Alteration in the Formula of the Harlequin Romance Novels
1980s
watercolor & ink on paper
4 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 5 $\frac{3}{16}$
- Negus, Mark (Missouri)
Chanty
1984
carved & painted wood, brass
1 x 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 4
- Negus, Mark (Missouri)
Buffalo Bill & Pinwheel (and other collages)
1986
foil, watercolor, ink and pencil on paper
5 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 3 $\frac{5}{8}$ each (framed 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 20 $\frac{1}{4}$)
- Negus, Mark (Missouri)
President James A. Garfield in His Armor Sled, The Crawler
1981
oil paint on brass
1 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 2
- Negus, Mark (Missouri)
Rarbebidtt
1984
brass
3 x 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 1
- Negus, Mark (Missouri)
Selfportrait on the Stick
1984
ink on paper
5 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 4 $\frac{1}{2}$
- Negus, Mark (Missouri)
Selfportrait
2008
watercolor on paper, wood, thread
6 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ x $\frac{1}{2}$
- Negus, Mark (Missouri)
Shanachie Whisps in Kodak Fantasia
1986
oil on canvas
5 x 7
- Negus, Mark (Missouri)
Stumbler (Model for an Ice Cream Cone)
1982
carved wood
4 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 1 $\frac{1}{2}$
- Negus, Mark (Missouri)
The Russian Revolution—An American Experiment in Socialist Realism
1981
painted brass
1 x 4 x 2 $\frac{1}{2}$
- Negus, Mark (Missouri)
The Spirit's Foot
1986
ink on paper
12 x 20 (framed)
- Negus, Mark (Missouri)
The Tree That Kissed Itself
1986
oil on canvas
7 x 5
- Negus, Mark (Missouri)
A Pauper's Dominion
1996
watercolor and ink on paper
6 x 8
72. Negus, Mark (Missouri)
Cornucopian Plough & Kettle Drumball Corps
1984
ink on postcard
3 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$
73. Negus, Mark (Missouri)
The Saturday Afternoon Mail
1981
ink and watercolor on paper
8 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 8
74. Owen, M. L. (North Carolina)
Take a Snort
c. 1983
ceramic
9 x 7 x 7 $\frac{1}{2}$
75. Perkins, Benjamin F. (Alabama)
Jesus Is the Only Answer
c. 1987
acrylic on canvas
34 x 32
76. Perkins, Benjamin F. (Alabama)
All American Jumbo Airmail
1980s
painted metal mailbox
11 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 7 x 21
77. Perkins, Benjamin F. (Alabama)
Le[t] Jesus Be Your Valentine
1980s
painted gourd
13 x 12 x 11
78. Perkins, Benjamin F. (Alabama)
Let Jesus Rule Our H[e]art
1980s
painted gourd
12 x 10 x 10
79. Perkins, Benjamin F. (Alabama)
There Is Only One Life
1980s
painted gourd
13 x 9 x 10
80. Puro, Ernest (Montana)
Mother and Child
1971
carved stone on concrete base
9 x 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 3 $\frac{1}{2}$
81. Reuter, Winona (Arkansas)
A Copy (Mona Lisa)
early 1980s
pastel & charcoal on paper
25 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 19 $\frac{1}{2}$

82. Robertson, Royal (Louisiana)
The Catchers
1988
ink and ballpoint on paper
28 x 22
83. Rogers, Juanita (Alabama)
Picnic
c. 1980
pencil, pen and paint on paper
11 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 17 $\frac{3}{4}$
84. Rogers, Juanita (Alabama)
Standing Creature
c. 1980
unfired clay, hair, grasses
10 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 5
85. Rowe, Nellie Mae (Georgia)
I Wont Peace
c. 1977
colored pencil on paper
28 x 22
86. Rowe, Nellie Mae (Georgia)
Try God
c. 1977
ballpoint and crayon on paper
7 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 6 $\frac{1}{8}$
87. Smith, Mary T. (Mississippi)
Hog Meet Good
1984
enamel on masonite
16 x 24
88. Smith, Mary T. (Mississippi)
The Horn Family
1985
ballpoint on paper
6 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 9
89. Smith, Robert E. (Missouri)
A Farm Somewhere in Montana
1987
paint on wood table
24 x 16 x 12
90. Smith, Robert E. (Missouri)
A Rural Family
1990
acrylic, pen and ink on illustration board
15 x 20
91. Smith, Robert E. (Missouri)
Alcatraz
1984
acrylic, pen and ink on canvas
36 x 48
92. Smith, Robert E. (Missouri)
Army Operations Unknown
1985
acrylic, pen and ink on illustration board
20 x 32
93. Smith, Robert E. (Missouri)
Drunken Woman
1986
acrylic, pen and ink on printed poster
17 x 22 $\frac{1}{2}$
94. Smith, Robert E. (Missouri)
Elkhorn, Montana
1987
acrylic, pen and ink on illustration board
15 x 20
95. Smith, Robert E. (Missouri)
Haunted Island
1985
acrylic, pen and ink on illustration board
15 x 20
96. Smith, Robert E. (Missouri)
President Reagan's Visit to Wambatu Island
c. 1981
acrylic, pen and ink on canvas
18 x 24
97. Smith, Robert E. (Missouri)
Raiding Bears in Montana
1987
acrylic, pen and ink on illustration board
20 x 30
98. Smith, Robert E. (Missouri)
Schizophrenia Ward #39
1983
pencil, acrylic, pen and ink on illustration board
30 x 40
99. Smith, Robert E. (Missouri)
The Accident of the Challenger Space Shuttle Ship
1986
acrylic, pen and ink on illustration board
15 x 60
100. Smith, Robert E. (Missouri)
The Hindenberg Disaster
1987
acrylic, pen and ink on illustration board
50 x 15
101. Smith, Robert E. (Missouri)
The Unexpected Storm
circa 1981
acrylic, pen and ink on illustration board
20 x 24
102. Smith, Robert E. (Missouri)
Wild Adventure
1987
acrylic, pen and ink on illustration board
15 x 20
103. Smith, Robert E. (Missouri)
Wild Adventure Story
1987
ballpoint, marking pen and whiteout on paper
18 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 34 $\frac{3}{4}$
104. Thacher, Mr. (Kansas)
This Book Is For Our Good Pastors
mid 1950s
pencil, crayon & ink
9 x 12
105. Tinnin, Carol (Missouri)
Christmas
1984
colored pencil on paper
22 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 28 $\frac{1}{2}$
106. Tinnin, Carol (Missouri)
Two Women and Dog
c. 1984
pencil & crayon on paper
11 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 18 $\frac{1}{2}$
107. Tinnin, Carol (Missouri)
This Is Pam and Dave
c. 1983
pencil & crayon on paper
14 x 23
108. Tolliver, Mose and L. W. Crawford (Alabama)
Plants, Cross and Sun
c. 1985
paint & matchsticks on wood
18 x 6

